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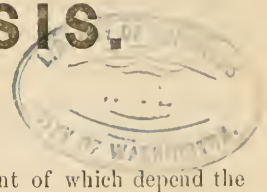


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THE CRISIS.

1867



WE are in the midst of a crisis, on the event of which depend the future peace and prosperity of the nation. Hardened by the fierce vicissitudes of the last six years, we look on apathetically while the republican institutions in which we glory are endangered, and we watch with languid curiosity a condition of affairs which, ten years since, would have convulsed the whole country with the wildest agitation. The co-ordinate branches of our Government are at variance. By a fatal error, the National Legislature has left the field, for the time, in the power of the Executive, and a faithless President is making the most of the opportunity. The laws of the land are left unexecuted, or are boldly set aside at the despotic will of a single man, who, blinded by ambition, and surrounded by such satellites as Binckley, Jeremiah Black, and Montgomery Blair, seeks to convert representative government into a dictatorship, and who scarcely veils his purpose to rule or ruin. Eager to reap the full benefit of his apostasy, the Democratic party is straining every nerve to get once more into power, that it may renew its old alliance with Southern rebels, and reconstruct the Union as nearly after the old pattern as is possible. All the burdens left us by the war are skilfully taken advantage of to persuade the unthinking that Democratic rule alone can restore the blessings of light taxes, low prices, and specie currency. Every local question is turned to account, where passion or prejudice can be worked upon. Every art, which the furious lust of power and of the spoils of office can suggest, is eagerly put in practice to gain votes on specious pretexts. The results we see in Maine and California.

What, then, are we doing in this perilous conjuncture? Exhausted by the labors and the sacrifices of the last six years, serenely confident in the justice of our cause and the triumph of our arms, we supinely wait to see power pass into the hands of the enemies of our great

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cause, that they may nullify all the results of our triumph. Petty local questions, of infinitesimal importance, are sufficient to divert us from considering the overwhelming issues at stake. We pause to think whether an individual is all that we would have him to be, before we can bring ourselves to vote for him, when that individual is as nothing himself, and we should only look upon him, whether worthy or unworthy, as personifying, for the moment, the great principles for which we have willingly sacrificed half a million of lives and countless millions of money. In these supreme crises of a nation's fate, individuals are nothing but the instruments with which we work; and a bad instrument, used to a good end, may be a thousand times preferable to a good instrument used to a bad end. Let not apathy or passing disgust paralyze us in the hour of our triumph, until the fruits of success turn to ashes on our lips.

For let us calmly consider what it is that lies before us in the immediate future. We have a Congress which has been gallantly struggling for a double purpose—to secure the results of the war in a durable peace and permanent unification of the country, and, at the same time, to preserve the legislative power of the people through their chosen representatives. On the other hand we have a President whose native subserviency to the old oligarchie and rebel element of the South has led him to quarrel with the party which placed him in power; whose violent passions and narrow mind have made him the tool of adroit and reckless schemers; who gathers around him, by a natural affinity, the worst elements from every section; and whose temper, inflamed by the opposition of Congress to his will, is evidently prepared to commit any action which would give him a temporary advantage over his antagonists, at the cost of plunging the whole country into confusion.

These differences between the Executive and the Legislature, involving not only the policy of the country, but the fundamental structure of its government, are rapidly approaching a crisis. Twelve months since, Mr. Johnson contented himself with stigmatizing Congress as a body "hanging upon the verge of the government." Six months ago, when vetoed bills were passed by the constitutional two-thirds, he pledged himself to carry them into execution. Now, he is no longer content with nullifying the laws by indirection and by

sophistically arguing away their plain intent and purpose, but he boldly sets them at naught, and exercises powers which have been specifically withheld from him. Congress has earnestly sought to avoid the issue which he is forcing upon us, but no ingenuity can longer delay it. Mr. Johnson and his Democratic and rebel allies see this and are prepared for it. Already his friends are circulating mysterious whispers of a *coup-d'état*; his leading organ of the press presumes to doubt whether the Fortieth Congress will ever reassemble; the air is thick with threatening rumors; the gold-market, that sensitive barometer, presages the coming storm; stagnation in trade shows how deeply men's minds are moved by the fearful eventualities of the next three months. What is needed to realize the worst of these forebodings? Only Democratic success in the fall elections!

If the ever-loyal city of Philadelphia, the rock against which the tempests of rebellious Democracy have spent their force in vain, should prove recreant to her well-earned glory—if the great State of Pennsylvania should belie her splendid record—what fearful encouragement would it not give to the miserable band who are plotting and scheming for the overthrow of our institutions? Pennsylvania is again the battle-ground of the Union, and not at Gettysburg were the lines more closely drawn or the issues more distinctly balanced. As Meade and Lee then led the opposing armies, so now are Williams and Sharswood, Thayer and Ludlow, Cowell and Lyle the leaders of their respective parties. In such a contest, for ends so momentous, personal preferences are as naught. The man disappears in the cause, and the country claims the devotion of every citizen at the ballot-box, as she once claimed his services in the field.

Should we, through fatal apathy and shortsightedness, permit the enemy to carry Pennsylvania, what hopes can we have of New York and New Jersey? Our example would be contagious, and we may well look forward with unaffected dread at the results if the great Middle States should appear to rally to the support of Johnsonism. Who can predict the mad career of a President thus encouraged by the apparent applause of the people—of a President who has so obstinately misused and transcended his powers even when the adverse verdicts of election after election have warned him to desist? Intoxicated with success, there is scarcely a crime against the State which

may not in advance be imputed to him on the testimony of his own adherents.

Even should Heaven avert from us these unimaginable evils which we should have invited, hardly less disastrous would be the result upon the settlement of all the great questions arising from the war. Congress is the representative of the people; politicians there are in it, quick to discern and apt to magnify the evidences of apprehended popular reaction. Supported by the people, Congress has bravely withstood the assaults of the Executive, and has laid the foundations of reconstruction based upon broad and enduring principles. Abandoned by the people, the moral force of Congress would be gone. Doubt and indecision would take the place of firmness and well-considered action. Every rebel would spurn anew the idea of submission. Every hostile element would unite for co-operation. Anticipated triumph would draw around them the venal, the unprincipled, and the thoughtless, and with aggregated strength they would control the position. Forcing their way into Congress, all possibilities of evil would be open to them. Assumption of the Confederate debt, repudiation of the national obligations, free trade, desperate tinkering with the finances, slavery revived under guise of peonage—such would be the programme before us, and it is worse than useless to shut our eyes to its probability when a change in a little over one per cent. of the voters in Pennsylvania and New York would give the prestige of success to those whose principles and whose policy would bring about such a catastrophe.

It matters little to us as citizens which of two eminent jurists shall sit upon the bench. It is absolutely unimportant to us which of two men, both equally indifferent to us individually, shall collect the fees of the Sheriff's office or shall draw the salary of the City Treasurer. But, by the sport of circumstances, questions of the highest significance that can affect the existence of a great people underlie these local and trivial issues. When Pennsylvania speaks, her voice is heard throughout the nation; and when she speaks in October, it will not be merely to decide as to the incumbents of local offices. It is Andrew Johnson who is upon trial, and it is her voice which will then pronounce the verdict.





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